FOCUS

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2015 International Year of Soils

healthy soils for a healthy life

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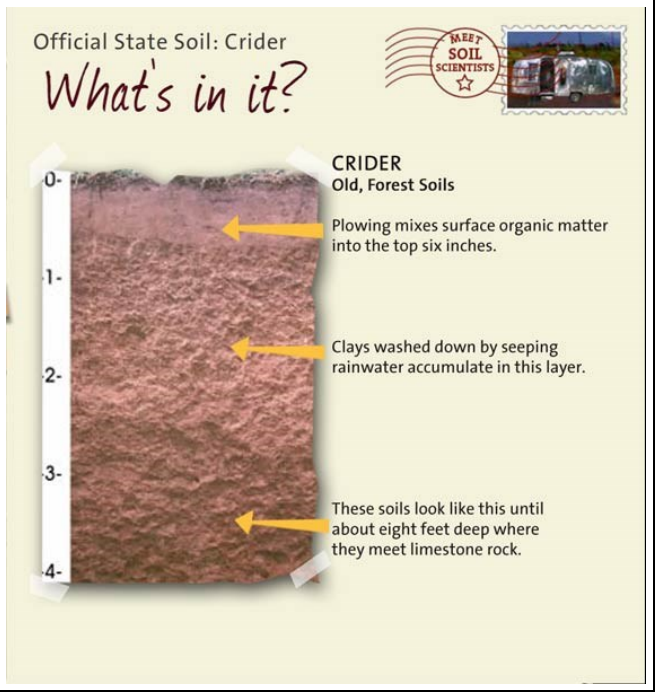
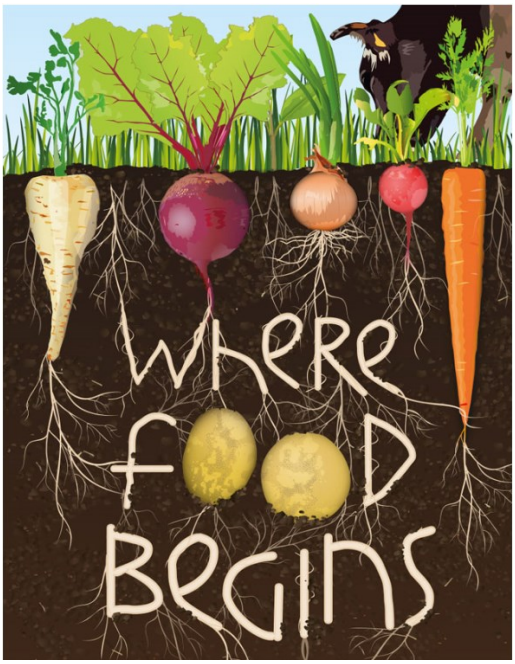


What is the International Year of Soils (IYS) 2015

The 68th United Nations General Assembly declared 2015 the International Year of Soils (IYS) (A/RES/68/232).



The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has been nominated to implement the IYS 2015, within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership and in collaboration with Governments and the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

The IYS 2015 aims to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of soil for food security and essential ecosystem functions.

The specific objectives of the IYS 2015 are to:

- Raise full awareness among civil society and decision makers about the profound importance of soil for human life;
- Educate the public about the crucial role soil plays in food security, climate change adaptation and mitigation, essential ecosystem services, poverty alleviation and sustainable development;
- Support effective policies and actions for the sustainable management and protection of soil resources;
- Promote investment in sustainable soil management activities to develop and maintain healthy soils for different land users and population groups;
- Strengthen initiatives in connection with the SDG process (Sustainable Development Goals) and Post-2015 agenda;
- Advocate for rapid capacity enhancement for soil information collection and monitoring at all levels (global, regional and national).

Spotlighting humanity's 'silent ally,' UN launches 2015 International Year of Soils

5 December 2014 – Healthy soils are the foundation for food, fuel, fibre and even medicine said the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) today as it kicked off 2015 the International Year of Soils on the first-ever World Soil Day.

Soils are also essential to our ecosystems, playing a key role in the carbon cycle, storing and filtering water, and improving resilience to floods and droughts, and yet we are not paying enough attention to this important "silent ally," the UN agency explained.

The International Year of Soils kicks off today at events in Rome, New York and Santiago de Chile, in an effort to raise awareness and promote more sustainable use of this critical resource.

"Today, we have more than 805 million people facing hunger and malnutrition. Population growth will require an approximately increase of 60 per cent in food production," FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva warned today.

"Unfortunately, 33 per cent of our global soil resources are under degradation and human pressures on soils are reaching critical limits, reducing and sometimes eliminating essential soil functions," he added. The UN General Assembly declared 5 December World Soil Day in December 2013. The Day and Year kicks off today with events in Rome, New York and Santiago de Chile, in an effort to raise awareness and promote more sustainable use of this critical resource.

"I invite all of us to take an active role in promoting the cause of soils during 2015 as it is an important year for paving the road towards a real sustainable development for all and by all," Mr. Graziano da Silva said.

FAO estimates that a third of all soils are degraded, due to erosion, compaction, soil sealing, salinization, soil organic matter and nutrient depletion, acidification, pollution and other processes caused by unsustainable land management practices.

Unless new approaches are adopted, the global amount of arable and productive land per person will in 2050 be only one-fourth of the level in 1960.

It can take up to 1,000 years to form one centimetre of soil, and with 33 per cent of all global soil resources degraded and human pressures increasing, critical limits are being reached that make stewardship an urgent matter, Mr. Graziano da Silva said.

Calling soils a "nearly forgotten resource," he urged investment in sustainable soil management, saying that would be cheaper than restoration and "is needed for the achievement of food security and nutrition, climate change adaptation and mitigation and overall sustainable development."

Echoing that call, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that without healthy soils, "life on Earth would be unsustainable." Indeed, soils are the foundation of agriculture. They provide vital ecosystem services and the basis for food, feed, fuel, fibre and medical products important for human well-being.

"Soil is also the largest pool of organic carbon, which is essential for mitigating and adapting to climate change. In an era of water scarcity, soils are fundamental for its appropriate storage and distribution," said Mr. Ban, urging all States to pledge to do more to protect this important yet forgotten resource. "A healthy life is not possible without healthy soils," he declared.

According to FAO, at least a quarter of the world's biodiversity lives underground, where, for example, the earthworm is a giant alongside tiny organisms such as bacteria and fungi. Such organisms, including plant roots, act as the primary agents driving nutrient cycling and help plants by improving nutrient intake, in turn supporting aboveground biodiversity as well.

Better management can assure that those usually unnoticed organisms boost soil's ability to absorb carbon and mitigate desertification, so that even more carbon can be sequestered – helping offset agriculture's own emissions of greenhouse gases.

Marking the Year, FAO has implemented more than 120 soil-related projects around the world and produced together with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Soil Map. Among the most urgent priorities is to update, standardize and render accessible the world's knowledge of soil types and distribution.

Currently, data on soils is very often outdated, limited in coverage, and fragmented in nature. One of FAO's priorities is to establish a global soil information system that could assist with reliable data decision-making regarding soil management.

Kentucky's State and MLRA Soil Scientists

Steve Neyhouse-
Steve has in 24 years with NRCS. Previously work areas include the Indiana counties of Pike, Putnam, Perry, Warrick, Knox, Harrison, Floyd, Clark, Fountain, and Bartholomew.

Steve is a Soil Scientist, stationed in the Owensboro MLRA Soil Survey Office, working on soil survey updates for MLRA's 120, 121, and 122. These MLRA's cover parts of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio.
Steve collects toy tractors, serves on various committees at his church and the Purdue Alumni Club of Lincoln Hills. He enjoys home fix up projects, some auto repair challenges, and doing crossword puzzles. He is a 1974 graduate of Purdue University.

Steve is married and has a blended family of 7, and of that, 3 are named Steven. A granddaughter was a recent addition in late 2014. Before working for SCS/NRCS, Steve was a Soil Scientist for the Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources, a Revegetation Technician for AMAX Coal, and a Soil Conservation Technician for IDNR's T by 2000 cost share program.

David Gehring

David is a Resource Soil Scientist on the KY Soils Staff located in Owensboro, KY.

Years been working for NRCS: 15

David enjoys gardening and spending time with his family and travelling. He has two daughters (8 and 12) and I has been coaching or assistant coaching his oldest daughter's recreational soccer team for the past 2 years. He is currently expanding his horizons by learning to play acoustic guitar while his wife is learning to play mandolin.

Matt McCauley

Matt is the MLRA Soils Survey Office Leader located in Owensboro, KY. He has been working for the agency for 27 years.

Matt has several hobbies which include dogs, Kentucky basketball, going out to KY Lake, outdoor activities and horse racing.

Steve Blanford-

Steve is the KY State Soil Scientist working out of the Lexington State Office.

He has been working with the SCS/NRCS for 28 years.

His current nickname is ZZ-topsoil.

Jerry McIntosh—27 years with NRCS

Began career as a soil survey project member in Bell, Harlan, and Clay counties in southeastern KY. Then served as Project Leader for Graves Co along with overseeing update projects in Fulton and Ballard & McCracken counties in far western KY from 1991-2009.

Currently Resource Soil Scientist for Area 1 responsible for on -site soil investigations and wetland determinations for the 26 counties encompassing the area from the Mississippi River to Henderson to Bowling Green. Also enjoy working with farmers to understand soils/agronomic data as related to Precision Ag technologies/applications.

Enjoy playing golf and landscape work around the home. Also enjoy helping out on the family farm in Muhlenberg County and spending time with my wife, daughter, and boss of the family, a Goldendoodle named Lilly.

Am a registered geologist with the state of Kentucky.

Through church, our family provides annual financial support for a 14- year old boy from El Salvador in order for him to attend school and have meals during the school year.

Patrick (Scott) Aldridge
—24 years with NRCS

MLRA Soil Scientist

Managed out of MLRA office in London KY but Stationed at Kentucky State University in Frankfort.

I have a Registered Purebred Charolais Farm. We host largest commercial purebred sale East of the Mississippi River in Bowling Green KY on the third Saturday in April for the pass three year. Beside farming, I like to go trout fishing and play golf.

Steve Jacobs

Steve is a Resource Soil Scientist on the KY Soil Staff. He has worked for NRCS for 36 years and is currently working in the Maysville Field Office.

Steve is married and has been for 31years. He and his wife have two sons and now two daughter-in-laws. He enjoys hunting deer, waterfowl, turkey, and anything else in season.

Jackie Douglas McIntosh

Doug is the MLRA Soil Survey Office Leader. He is located in the London, KY office and has been with the agency for 29 years.

He and his wife have two grown up children, a daughter and a son. Doug and his wife like to garden and he likes to play guitar and is currently building a ukulele.

Anita Arends

Anita is the Ecological Site Inventory Specialist, 6-OWN and works out of the Frankfort, KY office.

She has bee working for NRCS since 2006. Before joining NRCS, Anita worked for the US Forest Service, the National Park Service, and spent 3 years as a National Program Manager for BLM in Washington DC.

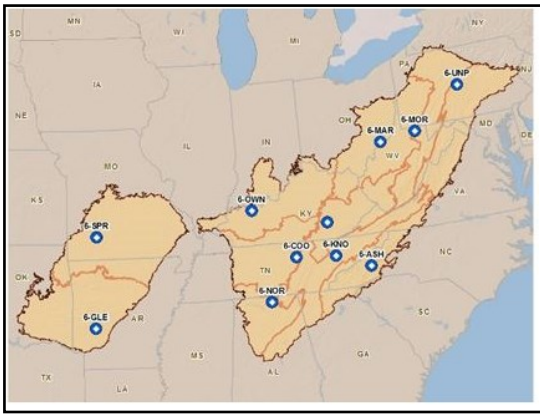
For a hobby she participate in Dressage, which is an equestrian sport. Last year she won the United States Dressage Federation Region 2 AA-Championship at 1st Level.

Angel (Angelito) M. Domenech Emmanuelli

Angelito is an MLRA Soil Scientist working out of the Owensboro, KY office. He started with NRCS in January 2011.

He is an active person that like outdoor activities. He likes going to the gym and runs in 5K and 10K events. He is originally from Puerto Rico and enjoys travelling.

MLRA Structure



Major Land Resource Area Soil Survey Region number 6.

The Major Land Resource Area Soil Survey Region 6 (MO-6) office, located in Morgantown, West Virginia, is one of 12 Soil Survey Region Offices serving the National Cooperative Soil Survey in the United States and comprises roughly 261,101 square miles. The Appalachian and Interior Plateaus Soil Survey Region is comprised of 23 Major Land Resource Areas (MLRAs). Major land resource areas are made up of geographically-associated land resource units that are similar in physiography, climate, water resources, and soils.

Major Land Resource Areas within MO-6 in KY

120A– Kentucky and Indiana Sandstone and Shale Hills Valley Southern Part

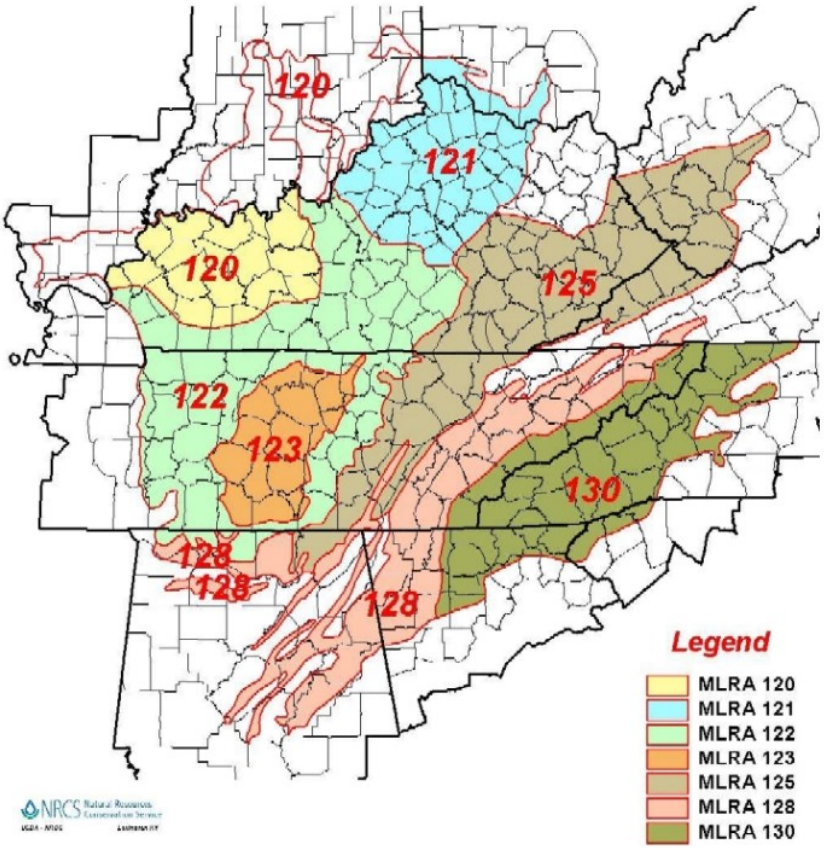
120B– Kentucky and Indiana Sandstone and Shale Hills Valley Northwestern Part

120C-Kentucky and Indiana Sandstone and Shale Hills Valley Northeastern Part

121– Kentucky Bluegrass

122– Highland and Pennyroyal

125– Cumberland Plateau and Mountains



For additional information on the International Year of Soils.

Food and Agriculture Organization website:

www.fao.org/soils-2015/en/